

Bulldogs fall to Pitt St. 3-1

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The volleyball team dug a deep hole early, and they never could climb out of it.

The No. 15 Bulldogs fell behind 2-0 and lost 3-1 to No. 17 Pittsburgh State University Saturday night. The loss drops the Bulldogs to 13-5 overall and 4-2 in the MIAA.

"That was just an embarrassing loss," head coach Jason Skoch said. "First off they could have beaten anybody in the country the way they played. But we played by far our worst match of the year. It was a nasty combo. It was an ass-whooping just to put it bluntly."

Junior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal said Pitt was able to control the game early because they got off to a fast start.

"We just started out slow and that just gave them the tone and they just took it from there," Graybeal said.

The 'Dogs and Gorillas battled through a back-and-forth first set that saw 11 ties and three lead changes. A kill by senior right side hitter Melissa Keck tied the score at 23, but Pitt answered with back-to-back kills by Sammie Williams, who finished with a match-high 19 kills to put Truman away.

Pitt cruised to victory in the second set by using a 13-5 run at the beginning of the set to bury the Bulldogs.

Truman came back to win the third set 25-21, but Pitt used another early run in the fourth set to finish off the Bulldogs for good. The 'Dogs are 0-4 in four-set matches this season and have not won a match in which they have fallen behind 2-0.

Pitt hit .347 for the match and committed just 17 attack errors. The Gorillas are the first MIAA team to hit above .300 against the Bulldogs since Northwest Missouri State University accomplished the feat in 2000. Non-conference opponents Southwest Minnesota State University and Concordia University St. Paul (Minn.) also hit above .300 against the Bulldogs in earlier matches this season.

Senior outside hitter Eli Medina paced the Bulldogs with 14 kills and just one error. This was the fifth consecutive match Medina has reached double digits in kills. She finished with

28 attacks for the match, giving her 514 for the season. The next closest Bulldog is senior middle blocker Allie Cherven, who has 309 attacks.

Medina said the Bulldog defense was non-existent against Pitt.

"Our blocking wasn't there, and then our defense wasn't there to pick up and make plays," Medina said. "It was just a quixotic effect and one thing led to another. It was very frustrating."

Keck returned to action after missing Friday's match with a knee injury. She recorded four kills in limited action.

The Bulldog's 13-5 record is the team's worst record through 18 matches since 1999. That team rebounded to win the MIAA with a 14-2 conference record.

The loss also dropped Truman's record against ranked opponents to 1-5. Last year the Bulldogs finished 11-3 against ranked opponents.

On Friday the Bulldogs picked up their fourth conference win of the season with a sweep of Missouri Southern State University.

Medina paced the 'Dogs with 13 kills as 13 different Bulldogs took the floor. Cherven chipped in with nine kills. Truman hit .317 for the match and held Southern to a .182 hitting percentage. Junior right side hitter Erin Hattey had eight kills and hit .412 for the match.

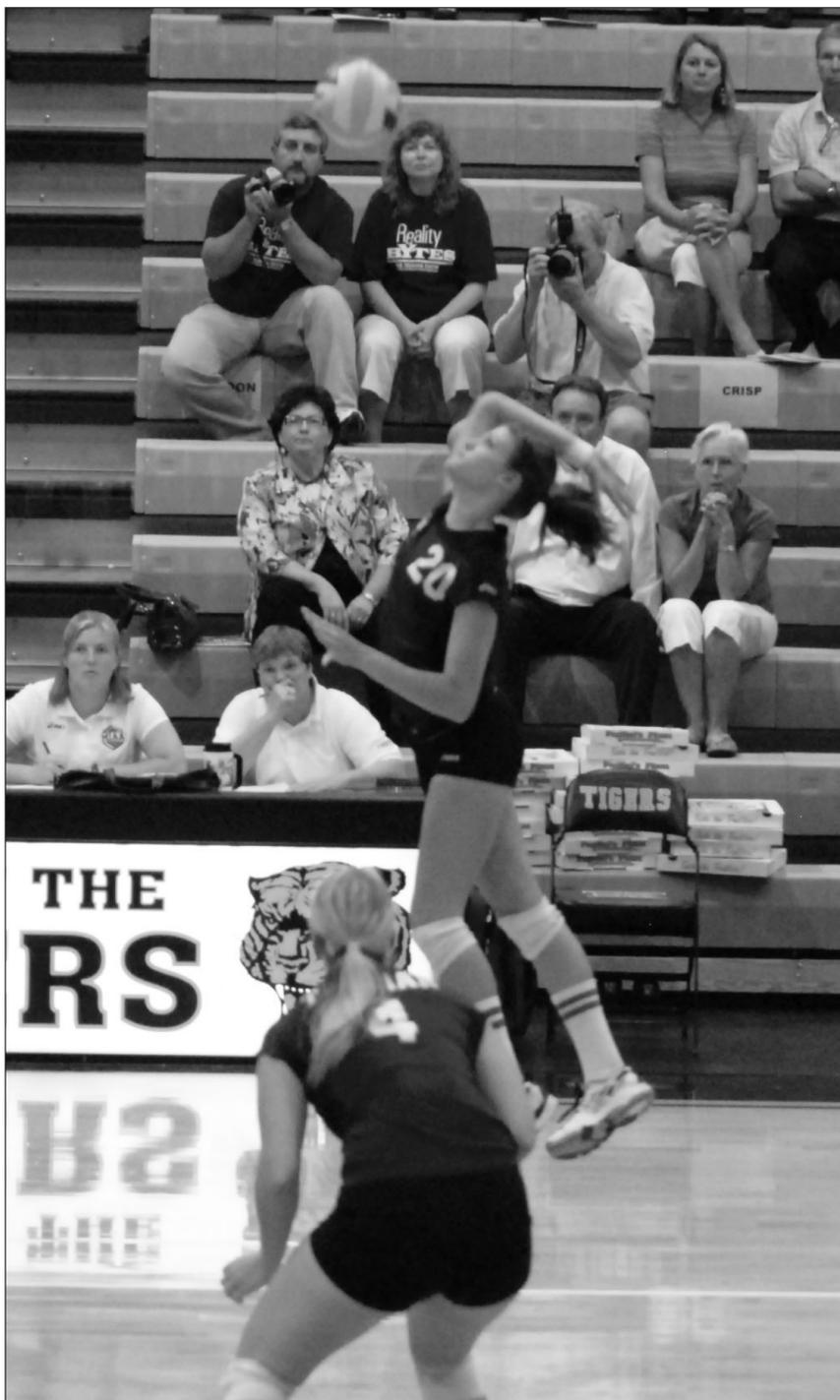
In the first set Truman exchanged points to a 19-19 tie. But back-to-back errors by Southern propelled the Bulldogs to a 6-2 run to take set one.

The second set was similar to the first with both teams trading points back and forth until two late Missouri Southern errors did them in. Down 20-19 Missouri Southern had a chance to tie the score, but two straight attack errors ended the Lions hope as the Bulldogs took set two.

In the third set the 'Dogs jumped out to a quick 10-4 lead and never looked back as they finished off the sweep with a 25-15 victory.

Senior libero Whitney Boehler finished with a team-high 23 digs for the Bulldogs. Truman finished with 20 more digs than the Lions.

The Bulldogs step out of conference this week with a trip to Topeka, Kan., for the Washburn Lady Blues Fall Classic where they will take on four regional opponents.



Mayank Dhungana/Index

With the recent injury to senior right side hitter Melissa Keck, junior Erin Hattey (20) has seen increased playing time. In two matches this weekend, Hattey hit .306. She is eighth on the team in kills for the season.

Volleyball prepares for Classic

Volleyball to get break from MIAA play at tournament

BY BRENT FOSTER
Staff Reporter

The Bulldogs are getting a much-needed break from the rugged MIAA schedule.

Truman steps out of conference play this weekend for four matches against regional competition in the Lady Blues Fall Classic in Topeka, Kan.

Head coach Jason Skoch said he is not looking past any of the four matches this weekend.

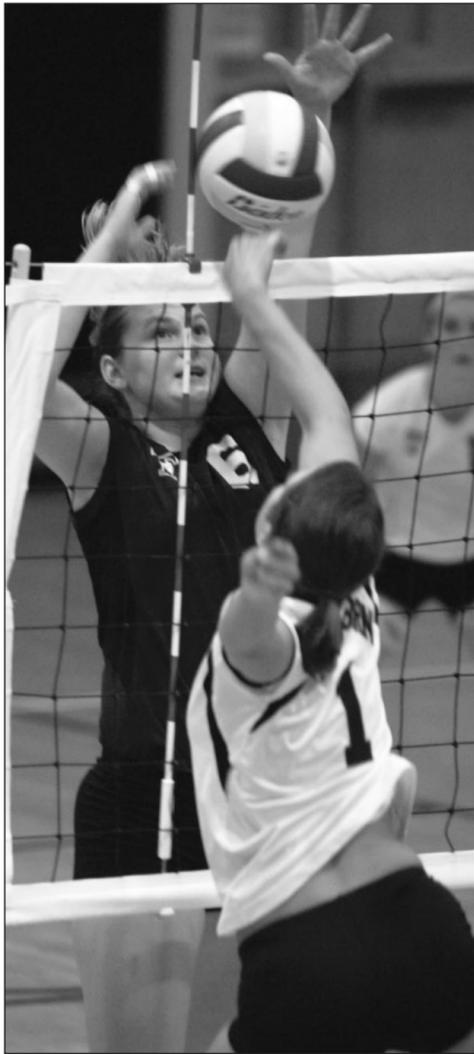
"We have our own challenges, and I'm not looking too far ahead," Skoch said. "I'm just happy that we don't have a match Wednesday, and we get four days to work the hell out of them."

Last season the Bulldogs used the Lady Blues Classic to springboard the rest of their season. Truman won all four matches in the 2007 classic, which began a nine-match winning streak during which the team only lost three sets.

Although the Bulldogs will not be playing any MIAA teams in the classic, the weekend is important because all four matches are regional matches. The top eight teams from each region advance to the NCAA Tournament, so winning matches within the region is important for the Bulldogs.

"We really need to focus on playing as a team," junior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal said Monday. "We play a lot of regional teams, which is important for our rankings. Obviously we want to be at the top. ... We have four practices this week so hopefully that will help us work out some kinks."

The Bulldogs might have to play the weekend without senior right side hitter Melissa Keck, who has been hampered by a right knee injury. Keck did not play in Friday's win against Missouri Southern State University, and saw limited action in Saturday's loss to No.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Junior right side hitter Lauren Graybeal goes up for a block against Washburn on Sept. 19.

17 Pittsburgh State University. Skoch said Monday that the team would know more after an MRI was performed Wednesday. Keck declined an interview request, and Skoch did not release the results of the MRI.

Keck is second on the team in hitting percentage and third in kills per set.

"Nobody really knows what's to come," senior outside

hitter Eli Medina said. "We'll see I guess after Wednesday. I really think that we'll be OK. We have [junior right side hitters] Erin Hattey and Lauren Graybeal. Both of them are doing awesome offensively and making plays defensively. I think it will balance out and we'll be good."

So far this season Graybeal has played in 56 sets and

is fourth on the team with 56 kills. Hattey has seen action in 29 sets and is eighth on the team with 48 kills. Hattey saw more significant time last season, playing in 36 of the team's 42 matches, recording 150 kills.

The Bulldogs' toughest match in the Classic appears to be their final match against No. 20 Midwestern State University (Texas). The Mustangs come in to the classic at 18-0 but have yet to play a ranked team this season, compared to the Bulldogs, who have played six ranked teams in 18 matches. Midwestern will play two ranked teams in the classic before they get to Truman, however. Their first two matches are against No. 11 Emporia State University and No. 9 Washburn University.

The Mustangs are led by junior middle blocker Alysha Pritt. She averages more than three kills per set and leads the team with 192 kills.

The Bulldogs open the classic tomorrow morning against Texas Permian Basin University. The Falcons enter the classic with a 10-8 record, but the match against Truman will be their first outside the state of Texas.

In the nightcap Friday, the Bulldogs take on the University of Incarnate Word (Texas). UIW is 9-7 this season and played in the Nebraska-Kearney fall classic earlier this season alongside the Bulldogs. The two teams did not meet, but they played common opponents that weekend. Incarnate and Truman defeated Chadron State University (Neb.) and the University of Mary (S.D.). The Bulldogs and Cardinals both were defeated by Nebraska-Kearney University.

Truman opens up play Saturday with a match against East Central University (Okla.). The Tigers are 5-10 this season. They are 0-3 against the MIAA this season, after being swept by Emporia State University, the University of Nebraska-Omaha and Fort Hayes State University.

TRUMAN ATHLETICS News and Notes

Men's Soccer: Beil to sit out Wednesday

The men's soccer team was without sophomore back Craig Beil for Wednesday's game against Quincy University.

Beil received a red card in the 88th minute of Sunday's 2-0 loss against Lewis University (Ill.). According to NCAA rules, when a player gets a red card, he is ejected from that game and must sit out the entire next game. Sophomore back Ben Friesen got his first start of the season in Beil's absence.

Beil's red card was a straight red card, marking the second time this season a Bulldog has received a straight red. Head coach Duke Cochran said he thinks the straight red given to Beil was inappropriate.

"A straight red with two minutes left — it wasn't needed," Cochran said. "But the ref had let the game get out of hand."

Cochran said the incident occurred as a Lewis player was dribbling to the corner flag in a stall effort to waste time. Cochran said this was the fourth time the player had performed this stall tactic and Beil had stolen the ball the first couple of times.

This time, after Beil won the ball, Cochran said the Lewis player fell and kicked Beil and Beil's foot then hit the Lewis player in the face. He said the referee thought Beil intentionally kicked the Lewis player in the face, but Cochran disagreed.

Cochran also said he doesn't approve of the time-wasting tactic.

"When players [dribble to the corner], they're not necessarily asking for the foul, but it's time-wasting, it's negative soccer, it's not for the good of the game," he said.

Beil has appeared in seven games and started three games this season. Friesen has appeared in all nine games this season, but yesterday was his first start.

Volleyball: Team ranked outside top 10

A long streak has ended for the volleyball team. The Bulldogs dropped out of the top 10 in the CBS College Sports Network/AVCA Coaches Poll for the first time since Nov. 2, 2002, a span of nearly six seasons.

The 'Dogs fell to No. 11 in the Sept. 15 poll and they currently sit at No. 15. This is the first time under head coach Jason Skoch the team has not been in the top 10. Truman started this season ranked No. 3, but never rose any higher.

Truman spent five weeks as the No. 1 team in 2006 but has never finished a season ranked No. 1.

Football: Possession battle won

For the first time this season, Truman won the battle of time of possession.

Against Fort Hays State University last Saturday, the Bulldogs held the ball for 31:22, slightly more than half the game.

Keeping the ball longer on offense generally gives the defense more time to rest.

Head coach Shannon Currier said the best teams aren't always the ones that lead in time of possession. Many teams, like Truman, run a spread offense which doesn't take as much time off the clock as a team that runs the ball often, and Currier said he would rather have an offense that scores quickly than one that has long possessions and doesn't score as many points.

On Saturday, the 'Dogs ran the ball 34 times, the most they have run all season, which contributed to winning the possession time.

The Bulldogs had the ball for more than 10 minutes in the second quarter, mostly because they had a 16-play, 77-yard touchdown drive that took up 7:28.

Senior linebacker Eric Sternberg said players don't usually think about time of possession during a game.